

Brown Bag Session with Mary Glackin
Session Comments and Notes
NOAA Sand Point Facility, Seattle Washington
January 13, 2004
12:30 -1:30 p.m.

1. Some things we cannot change but others are completely within our power to change.
2. Gen. Kelly said that we need to stop thinking about new money for new programs. There is a huge disconnect between a \$ billion NOAA goal and a program in a Lab. We must link together input from the Labs rolling up into the highest level goals and marry them to the funding managed under CAMS.
3. Communications is one of the areas that needs to be improved – programmatic, technical, and operational communications. This is a key underlying issue of our organizational structure. We need to communicate between headquarters and line offices. "I've worked on two teams and I haven't seen anything come out of it yet." Our NOAA SFA program has told us twice that communications are not good within NOAA. One of the critical communication issues involves the allocation of funds early in the year. Not all funds are being allocated but senior management is being told differently.
4. It is a skills issue, not a top-down communication issue. The top down communications is now very good. Great strides have been made with letters/emails from the Admiral.
5. Bottom up communications are often not good. Scientists lack the training and skills to be persuasive and overall good communicators. They need to be better.
6. Traditionally, we have put people in positions without skills or skill. In general, people at all levels need to develop better communication skills.
7. There are also institutional communications problems. We have a problem with employees not knowing how employees want to get information from senior management.
8. Integration of programs is great but people are still very competitive for funding which holds back progress. It is a culture we have at NOAA. We are respectful of each other but competition remains a barrier. People in the different regions compete against each other.
9. The University of Washington in the PRISM program is doing an environmental model of Puget Sound.
10. Alaska Region contributed to "the present" view in PPBS but were not asked to contribute to the future "how to do it right" view.
11. Question to Mary Glackin... "Is your 'box' (PPI) going to try to reduce stove piping at NOAA?" Mary Glackin's response: Yes, all Matrix Managers report to the Assistant Administrator in PPI. The reason there is an AA in the PPI position is to allow NOAA to be more corporate. The Program Review brought about Matrix Management and the PPI Office.
12. Question to Mary Glackin: We were responsible to the Ecosystems Goal Team. We gave information to them but didn't hear back from them. Wouldn't it be important for people in the field to provide feedback? Do you have a sense of how we should respond? Mary Glackin's response: We really need to quiz goal team leads to find out how we are getting back to people who provide input to their efforts. These teams need to be something like Integrated Product Teams. There has got to be a better way to manage.
13. Councils are valuable for gathering input. The composition of Councils needs to be critically reviewed. The composition may need to be adjusted to provide better field representation and better management on the Councils. Some people assigned to the Councils are in developmental positions and are not the decision makers and cannot fully contribute. Examples are the Workforce Management Council and the CFO Council. There is degradation of Council participation where high level leaders are appointed but then send other staff that do not have decision making authority.

14. There is a perception by scientists that they don't need to be involved in planning, PPBS, etc.
15. Diversity needs improvement. NOAA Science Camp is an excellent experience and an excellent example of promoting diversity for 100 children in NOAA. We need to continue funding for this outstanding outreach to provide scientific literacy.
16. NOAA is "eating their children" by taxing programs for administration.
17. Question: With the expected cuts in budgets, will RIFS be considered? Answer: The Admiral worked very hard to avoid a RIF in FY03.
18. Currently, there are no promotions, hiring freezes, no training, and our staffing is now cut "past the bone". Things implode. NOAA may need to actively manage RIFs if the budget is cut so severe that it's needed. RIFs can be used as a management tool rather than simply a way of getting rid of people. Holding vacancies is not managing. Are we managing with all the tools we have? A 2006 budget solution won't help the situation. We need support and help now.
19. We need more communication and information (content) flow from the top down – what is being communicated is very important. Content must be thought out and well-directed. There does not seem to be a centralized place within NOAA to tap into that information. For example, why is it so hard to get a Commerce State Justice Budget passed? Decisions by Councils should be made available. Also, what authority do the Councils have?
20. There seems to be indecision about what is being communicated from Headquarters and what is not being communicated. We don't know who to contact.
21. Now is not the time to have a disenfranchised workforce. These are serious problems that the front line wants to know what plan action is being taken to deal with these issues. They want to know is there is a plan to get out of our current budget problems. Improved communication is a top issue. HQ and Field must come together better and understand each other's needs more effectively.
 - a. Need more transparency, ease of communication, better flow.
 - b. Senior Management has not grasped the need for better communication.
 - c. We've heard "we've had town hall meetings" but they don't create an informal interactive dialogue. Councils, goal teams, programs need to provide staff with email updates so people know who to reach out and touch.
22. There is an under valued and under appreciated administrative support staff at NOAA.
23. Everyone needs to take responsibility for their own "promotion."
24. Most important consideration in crafting stakeholder/employee forums is to ask the right questions. Don't start with a negative question (as we did).
25. What you ask about is what you get. If you want to know how to move an organization forward, you ask, "How should we move the organization forward?" "What do we need to do to move the organization forward?"
26. Another example, "How do we build an integrated observations system?"
27. "Don't do what I say. Do what needs to be done."
28. Appreciative Inquiry Approach – "What do we do well?" This is a powerful approach to gathering stakeholder input but takes a long time, perhaps months to do it right.